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EDU 580/EDU585

Prince/Eretzian and Eretzian

Final Reflection

I began this course with some trepidation because I was not sure how practical it might be. The circumstances for my learning were just a bit different than the others, having finished and presented my final research already. The EDU580 component was to create an ePortfolio of my work in relationship to the ILLSC standards. I did ultimately find the exercise very useful and relevant.

The concept of an ePortfolio was not new to me, as I already had started one at the beginning of my graduate school journey on Wikispaces, but the ILLSC Standards were very new to me and exploring them in relationship to my evidence was where most new learning occurred. The initial exercise to review other ePortfolios was *extremely* helpful. Initially it was easier to pick out things that did not work. The harder task was identifying what did work, because when something is well done it can be hard to point out how it is done. I started working on my new ePortfolio in this first class armed with some new design ideas from the reviews that I wanted to incorporate into my new site. The two ideas that stuck out the most was “kill the portrait” because people change so quickly and portraits reveal almost too much about a person if they are done wrong AND “use tabs”. I decided to feature my own photography as the background and for that reason, Wix became my platform of choice.

I'm the type of person who loves to design websites. I think that this self-learning is more like therapy, to be honest. I find it very soothing to lose myself for a few hours designing something of use. I think many students also do the same thing. When they are interested in a thing, they can lose themselves in a harmonious self-learning chaos, puttering away until they are satisfied with what they are doing. The tough part is working with teachers and learners who have anxiety about design and code and technology. Once I had a top student (valedictorian!) burst into tears because her Wiki was all mucked up. I was very very gentle and kind with her as I explained that this was a natural part of the process. She was mostly upset because this work was not relevant to her learning Spanish! And I think most teachers feel that way too as they approach technology usage. It doesn't feel relevant yet. I think only relevance can motivate self-learning.

In terms of usefulness for students, I think an ePortfolio can be very useful, provided it is relevant, but has with it some inherent issues that must be addressed. The first issue is content and privacy. Teachers can only control so much of both, so a lot of work must go into preparing students for life on-line (even though they are already there). My main concern with students and ePortfolios is that if they are done "just for a class" they lose audience. If they are done for an audience (instant relevance) they must be protected. If they are not protected content can be an issue. I can see a final web page being created for a student to use, but in this day and age, an appropriate Google+, Tumblr, or Facebook profile might be a much better platform. Students are simply not aware of how much is already out there on their social media platforms and the need to have a "professional" side to the digital life.

In conclusion, building an ePortfolio with the standards as framework provided me with an opportunity to reflect on evidence of my leadership. This project gave me a lot of satisfaction because I was able to curate my evidence in a shiny, simple, elegant web space. I actually can see myself using this site as my top professional go-to site, which makes it very relevant, indeed.